



Welcome to Employment Connections' (EC) Division newsletter - *The Connection!* This newsletter focuses on sharing information to connect, engage, support and excel.

Read regular updates on projects and programs, and messages from Director Ismaila "Ish" Maidadi. We also want and need to hear from you! Send your thoughts and suggestions to the [EC Virtual Suggestion Box](#). Send newsletter ideas and comments to the EC Communications [inbox](#). We'll be in touch with you!

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- Message from the director
  - WIT project update
  - *Coming soon!* Out and about: In Union Gap, Sunnyside, and Columbia Gorge
  - Workforce conferences
  - Governor's Committee on Disability Issues & Employment -- volunteers needed.
  - CFD Fun and Games Day Fundraiser
  - National Hispanic Heritage Month begins Sept. 15

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## Message from the director



Greetings, Employment Connections team,

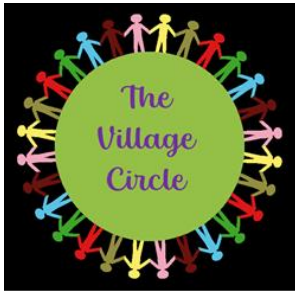
Here we are at the start of September, and Labor Day weekend is behind us. I hope you all took a well-deserved break from Employment Connections and got in some summer fun. Fall equinox is a few weeks away, and most state workers have taken their summer vacations and their kids are back to school.

Last month brought us tough news. Our EC community came to terms with the devastation created by the Maui and Washington wildfires around Medical Lake and Elk. I know many of you feel grief and emotional heartache. For Maui, the overwhelming loss of life is coupled with the loss of Native Hawaiian sites that can never be recovered.

For our own Washington wildfires, ESD leaders provided [resource updates](#), and Gov. Inslee proclaimed a [state of emergency on Aug. 19](#). This allows for three days of [wildfire miscellaneous paid leave](#) and expanded disaster cash assistance under the [Family Emergency Assistance Program \(FEAP\)](#) for those impacted by the 2023 wildfire season. For me, the best therapy is action. By donating to recovery efforts, we can all make a

difference. If you are interested, you can go through our own state-based giving program: [CFD Disaster Relief Recovery Center](#).

The Village Circle meetings are evolving as a productive space to talk about our shared work. This last month, we covered a variety of topics, and technology issues were top of mind for supervisors and staff. We heard you! A special team compiled a complete list of troublesome issues. These were discussed with the Information Technology Services Division (ITSD) team's Deb Calcote, interim chief information officer for ITSD. We now have a plan to work together and resolve issues as soon as possible. Many of your concerns were already on ITSD's radar, and some issues will take longer than others. Please be patient with the process. If new IT issues surface, please drop a note in the [Virtual Suggestion Box](#) with as much detail as possible.



August was packed with travel to conferences and EC team meetings. Even though it's exhausting, it is time well spent and critical for ESD's and EC's vision for supporting the next generation of the workforce. If you are interested in reading more about agencies and EC teammates attending conferences and how this impacts our work, check out the article [later in this newsletter](#).

We have a dedicated team creating and planning the comeback of our EC Supervisors' Summit on Oct. 3 to 5 in Olympia. For many supervisors, it will be their first time to attend. Supervisors work in two EC worlds – frontline services and leadership support; and many of them are the only one in their local WorkSource center. This event will create critical peer relationships and build in support and belonging for this hardworking group. To help with this, our WSS5 Team Leads are invited to join the summit. We hope to have as many supervisors and team leads attend as possible. I strongly encourage you to connect with your local administrator to get signed up.



The ESD Combined Fund Drive (CFD) Fun and Games Day Fundraiser at Game Farm Park in Auburn was a big hit. An estimated 250 to 300 people showed up. We had three softball teams from ESD. What a fun day and great way to round out the summer. There's a [special thank you to Jeanne Lenz](#), our CFD leader, and a [special article that covers game day](#).

That same weekend, we sadly learned that Jacksonville, Florida, suffered a racially targeted shooting resulting in the loss of three Black lives. It sickens my heart and weighs me down that racial and random attacks are part of what our families and communities worry about. Our state is not immune to the same biases and racial divide experienced in other states across this country. Earlier this week, Commissioner Cami Feek shared a [poignant message](#) from Ayanna Colman, EDI director, and Tennille Johnson, EC regional director.

The work we are all doing in equity, diversity and inclusion, will help when it comes to tough conversations and ultimately shifting our culture. We're working together to change old concepts one person, one family, one community at a time. We do have work to do, and we have one more leadership position to fill to help with that. I'm excited to share that we are posting the recruitment for our new assistant director of service delivery this week. We have taken time to define the position and align this strategic role with all aspects of EC services. I will share the recruitment with you as soon as it is live.



The month of September marks the beginning of National Hispanic Heritage Month (HHM), which starts on Sept. 15 and goes through Oct. 15. Heritage celebrations give us the space to learn about our cultural history and look at different cultures and the contributions they make. You'll find more on [HHM and ideas for celebrating](#) at the end of the newsletter.

Over Labor Day, I took some time to reflect on how grateful I am to be your colleague and director and how proud I am of all that our EC team is accomplishing this year. Your work makes a difference for so many individuals and their families, and it's all because of your daily efforts and big hearts. Be proud and know that you are appreciated for all that you are — not just the things you do.

*Ismaila Maidadi*

Ismaila "Ish" Maidadi  
Director, Employment Connections

[Return to top](#)

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## Project updates

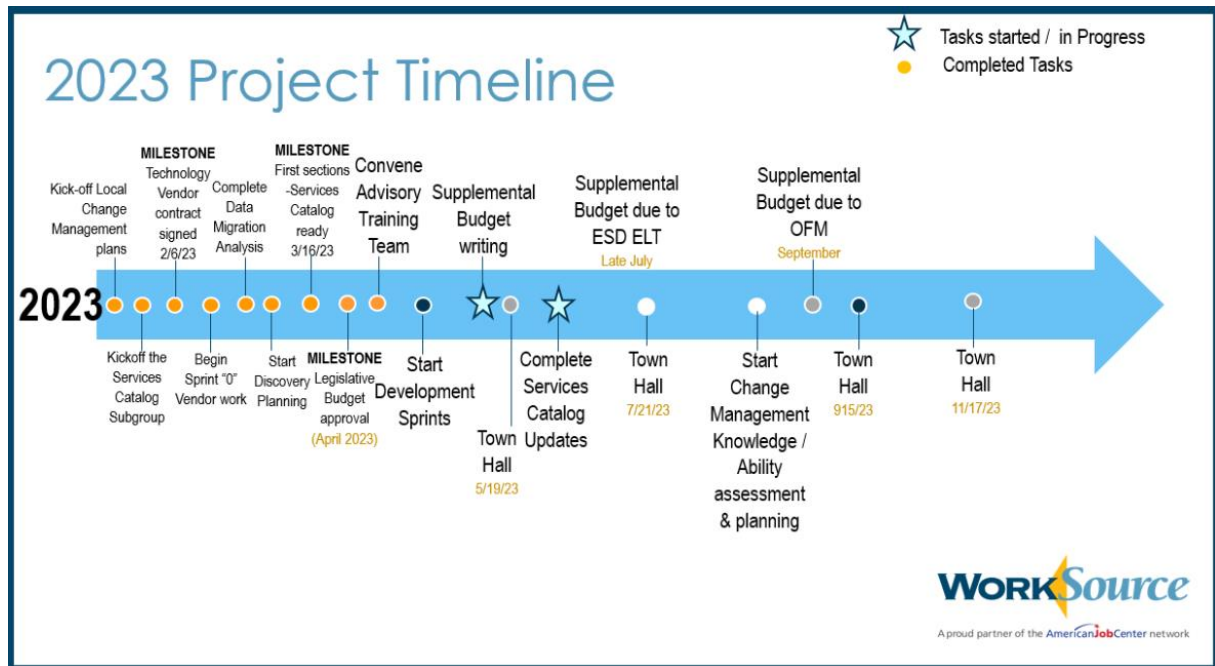


### ***A little bit about WIT***

*Submitted by Michelle Griffith, WIT Project Owner*

Although fall is just around the corner, it sure feels like the summer heat is on full blast! The WIT contract team has turned up the heat to execute next steps on a new contract. This work will help inform the updated project timeline. We promise that we will share this new timeline with all of you just as soon as we have the new contract in place. Our WIT team is also running at top speed and breaking a sweat on supporting efforts. These activities include completion of our new service catalog, analyzing exiting data as part of our data migration clean-up, and conducting research to help us better understand how our future WIT training will be constructed.

Here is a way for you to get involved in the WIT fun! We're getting ready to launch a statewide renaming contest for WIT. System staff will be able to submit their ideas for a new name. We're meeting with designated contest leads to provide an overview and a toolkit to kick off the contest in your area. Information on how you can submit a suggestion for the new name will be coming to your WorkSource locations within the next 30 days.



WIT reminders:

- The next WIT Town Hall Meetings are scheduled on Friday, Sept. 15, at 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Plan on attending one of the sessions or watching the recorded version on the [Workforce Professional Center](#) site.
- Have comments or suggestions for our WIT project team? You can submit feedback, ideas and questions directly to us by using the [input and questions form](#), which you can always find on the Workforce Professional Center site.
- Don't forget to regularly check out the [WIT Replacement Project](#) page on the Workforce Professionals Center site. It's continuously updated with excellent information about the project, including the most recent recordings from the WIT Town Halls, Q&As and project status updates.

Until next month ... that's a little bit about WIT!

[Return to top](#)

## Out and about: Creating connections. Building belonging.

**Coming soon!**

***Highlights from WorkSource Union Gap, Sunnyside, and Columbia Gorge.***

On Aug. 29-30, Employment Connections Director Ismaila Maidadi, Assistant Director Alberto Isiordia, Regional Director Todd Wurl, and other ESD leaders headed east to meet with several WorkSource teams. Stay tuned for a regional report where you'll learn about the latest about EC's Central Region and the new mall kiosk location in Union Gap.



*WorkSource office in Union Gap, WA. (Evan Abell/Yakima Herald-Republic)*

[Return to top](#)

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## Workforce conferences: getting back to in-person events.

*Submitted by Victoria Pruett, EC communications consultant, and Liane Johnson, PPP organizational change leader.*

### ***Why it's important for state agencies to attend and be present.***

Organizations and companies are again holding in-person conferences and meetings. Meeting in person to share, collaborate, learn and experience can be very meaningful.

For many Employment Connections (EC) and Employment Security Department (ESD) colleagues, the month of August was packed with travel to workforce and government conferences, and there are more to come before the year is done. The time and investment required to attend adds up in a positive way. There are important reasons why our agency and public service employees should go to conferences; for one, being present directly impacts the success of ESD's vision and mission.

A good example is the [National Governors Association Summer Workforce Symposium](#) held in early August in Fargo, North Dakota. This symposium focused on workforce and economic development challenges and best practices from over 24 states. It was a collaborative space to discuss how to maximize new federal investments for Washington's workforce through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), CHIPS and Science Act (CHIPS), and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

Also in August, the [Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration's Vision 2030 Workforce Convening](#) was about equity and quality jobs and how the workforce system drives change. Representatives from business, labor, state and local workforce boards, nonprofits, education, and training organizations attended. All were passionate about the work and wanted to engage, break down silos, build partnerships and strategize on how to invest in America's workers.



Commissioner Cami Feek and EC Director Ismaila Maidadi, along with EC staff and other state agency employees, attended the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) [Serving Those Who Served Conference](#) in Wenatchee on Aug. 24-25. This annual conference brings together experts providing Veterans services and fosters collaboration. Our leadership gave a presentation on [ESD's core values](#). One of the most compelling and challenging topics was on services for incarcerated Veterans, which led to conversations on how to work collaboratively across agencies to better support this underserved group.



Just a few months ago, EC created a strategic workgroup to address justice-impacted populations. The team is excited to give shape to this work. If you have a passion for working with individuals and families who are court-involved or dealing with incarceration, please reach out to [Anne Goranson](#), EC Strategic Initiatives manager.

Next week, Sept. 13-15, is the [National Association of State Workforce Agencies \(NASWA\) 2023 Summit](#), and state agencies and local partners will be making the trip. This is one annual event ESD and EC leadership is committed to. NASWA represents agencies from all 50 states, D.C. and U.S. territories. This is the summit where state agencies hear from policy experts, share best practices and promote state innovation in workforce development. Washington is often a leader in public sector innovation and two years ago launched [Government Innovation Washington](#) that provides a forum to explore and collaborate on state and regional projects.



ESD is a sponsor for the upcoming annual [Washington Workforce Association \(WWA\) 2023 Fall Conference](#) coming up on Nov. 14-16. in Tacoma, with several EC team members attending. This event brings together public workforce and economic development professionals, local area leaders, industry experts and elected officials to focus on the new and growing demands that impact our state's workforce system. It is a critical space for building

collaboration, community, and consensus around how best to serve the needs of Washington's workforce and employers.

To learn more about the value of in-person events and trends, check out:

[Seven Benefits of In-Person Events – And How to Make the Most of Them](#), Forbes, June 28, 2023.

[9 Trends That Will Shape Work in 2023 and beyond](#), Harvard Business Review, Jan. 18, 2023.

[Return to top](#)

## Resources and other updates

### Governor's Committee on Disability Issues & Employment is seeking new members.

#### **Do you know customers, friends or family members interested in improving the lives of people with disabilities?**

If you know people who are interested in disability justice and want to influence state decision makers, ask them to apply to become a volunteer member of the Washington State Governor's Committee on Disability Issues & Employment (GCDE).

The GCDE is currently recruiting for three committee members. Application deadline is Oct. 13, 2023. The committee has 25 volunteer members appointed by the governor. They serve a 3-year term with the possibility of being appointed to a second 3-year term.

All new members will be appointed by Gov. Inslee to serve terms starting January 2024.

Committee members can live anywhere in Washington state. They must have a disability; have a family member with a disability; or provide services to, or be an advocate for, people with disabilities.

Members identify issues and concerns about the rights and needs of people with disabilities, making recommendations to the governor, state Legislature, state agencies, the business community, and the public.

GCDE members serve on subcommittees that work on a variety of projects, such as community outreach, the Youth Leadership Forum and an employer awards program. New members are asked to serve on one or two subcommittees that most interest them.

To apply and to find out more about member qualifications and responsibilities, go to the GCDE [Become a member page](#).

[Learn more about GCDE](#) and its [current members](#).

[Return to top](#)

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### ESD Combined Fund Drive Fun and Games Day Fundraiser

#### ***It was a hot, sunny day with food and fun for everyone!***

The ESD Combined Fund Drive (CFD) Fun and Games Day Fundraiser was last Saturday, Aug. 26, at Game Farm Park in Auburn. Approximately 300 people showed up, which included seven softball teams from six state agencies — Employment Security Department, Department of Corrections (DOC), Department of Labor & Industries (L&I), Department of Enterprise Services (DES), Secretary of State (SOS) and Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS). Each team had their colors – yellow, pink, blue, green, teal, orange and ESD lime green for the “Bat Attitudes.”

Early in the morning, Commissioner Cami Feek pitched the first ball to Ismaila "Ish" Maidadi; and Auburn's Mayor Nancy Backus said a few words along with key charity representative, Tom Lyman, founder of [The Considerate Group Joy Hour](#). All event sponsors had spaces to connect with players, families and friends. It was a fun day with the last game ending at about 5 p.m.



People were busy buying raffle tickets, kids had a play space, hot dogs sold out, all the gift baskets were raffled off and the biggest silent-auction prize -- a collection of Seahawks branded merchandise -- ended up going for \$376 to our new favorite DES employee (to remain anonymous). Rhubarb the Reindeer, mascot for the Tacoma Rainiers, showed up to help with the raffle drawings. One of the umpires was the envy of the day. After buying just two \$1 tickets, he took home a Washington Lottery basket full of scratch-off tickets. We're all wondering if he is a big winner!

The day's donations came to approximately \$2,200, and that's not including sponsor and employee contributions through CFD, which at last count were over \$3,000. **It's not too late to make a donation** to the event. Just fill out the [CFD online contribution form](#), write in "ESD CFD Game Day fundraiser," and it will be credited to the game day's total contributions.

At the end of the day, DES took third place in the softball tournament, DSHS took second place and the SOS won first place with a final game score of 11 to 6. They will hold the trophy until next year when we get to do this all again!

A great big "thank-you" to Jeanne Lenz, our CFD leader, and to Albert Garza and Arnold Pasia from WorkSource Auburn for the heavy lifting of tables and pop-up tents. Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped make the event run so smoothly including Ann Hartman, who managed the team bracket boards, Gary Lott on camera and video, Lucy Mulumba of WorkSource Rainier and Kathie Williams of WorkSource Pierce on handling donations, Linda Kosko of ITSD, Anya Ritchie of the Attorney General's Office on raffle sales, Gillian Fox, Labor and Industries, and all the others that helped with food service and organization. which To read Director Maidadi's [personal thank you to Jeanne Lenz](#) on MS Teams.

CFD is looking for local WorkSource CFD coordinators. If you are interested in being a part of all the giving and fun events throughout the year or if you have questions, please call or email [Marie Burrows](#), director of People & Culture, or [Jeanne Lenz](#), ESD's CFD leader.





2023 ESD CFD softball tournament winners: Office of Secretary of State (SOS), with Jeanne Lenz, ESD CFD leader, and volunteer umpires from [State Agency Softball League](#).

Go to [InsideESD](#) to see more photos from ESD’s CFD Fun and Games Day Fundraiser, and for the full day’s coverage (500+ photos) from Gary Lott, ESD executive public affairs officer, see [2023.08.26 ESD CFD Softball Game | Flickr](#).

[Return to top](#)

## NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH — Sept. 15 to Oct. 15:

**This year’s theme is *Todos Somos, Somos Uno: We Are All, We Are One.***

Heritage month celebrations give us the space to learn about our cultural history and look at different cultures and the contributions they make. As the demographics of our country shift, it’s important to understand our “American” identity and what it means for future diversity and equity. Hispanic Heritage Month is when we celebrate the achievements, people, and diverse cultures of our Hispanic and American Latino communities.

**Hispanic** refers to a person who is from, or a descendant of someone who is from, a Spanish-speaking country.

**Latino/a** and **Latinx** refer to a person who is from, or a descendant of someone who is from, a country in Latin America.

Hispanic, Latinos and Latinx people who can trace their Spanish roots and heritage total 63.7 million living in the United States as of 2022. This makes them the largest racial or ethnic minority at 19.1% of the total population.\* Washington’s [Hispanic/Latino origin](#) population as of 2020 was 1,022,667; and the [Office of Financial Management](#) quotes Hispanic population at 12.93% of total population, with the highest percentages of Hispanic residents found in central Washington with Adams (69.2%), Franklin (55.9%), and Yakima (51.9%) counties posting the highest populations.



[Rumberger.com](#)

Hispanic Heritage Month (HHM) has been in place since 1968 and was originally established as Hispanic Heritage Week, which was extended to a full month in 1988. Since then, HHM has been held during the same period each year -- from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15. Sept. 15 was chosen as the date to begin celebrating as it is the anniversary of the start of the Mexican War of Independence, which resulted in independence for the land encompassing the nations of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Nicaragua. This month also covers other holidays and observances like Columbus Day or Día de la Raza, on Oct. 12.

During HHM and throughout the year, EC and ESD staff share about Hispanic heritage and accomplishments to keep awareness and recognition present through our own team's stories and inspirations. Earlier this year, ESD announced the formation of our own [Latino/a/e/x Employee Resource Group](#), which is in the process of building its charter and mission.

### ***How to celebrate: Thinking ahead***

Here are some ideas to get you thinking about Sept. 15 - Oct. 15:

- [Workplace fun for Hispanic Heritage Month 2023](#)
- [Dish up some delicious flavors](#)
- [Explore Latinx heritage through art](#)
- [Take a virtual tour of Hispanic TEDx influencers.](#)
- [Read books by Hispanic and Latino authors.](#)
- [hispanicheritagemoth.gov](#). *A collaborative project including the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institute, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and U.S. National Archives and Records Administration has resulted in the creation of this special web portal.*

For those of you interested in more information, check out:

- [Join Fiestas Patrias Festival at Seattle Center, Sept. 16-17, 2023](#)
- [Gov. Inslee's Proclamation of Oct. 4, 2021](#), Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs.
- [Proud of Our Past, Embracing Our Future](#), celebrating U.S. National Parks Service employees, 2022.
- [\\*Facts and figures: Hispanic Heritage Month 2023](#), U.S. Census Bureau, August 17, 2023.

Only 16 more days until Sept. 23. Then it's officially fall!



*Photo courtesy of Seattle King5 News.*